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ABSTRACT

This paper describes situational Navajo language immersion programs, explaining that situational classrooms recreate a situation in which students need Navajo to communicate and noting that Navajo is a very verb centered language. Situational Navajo takes many of the recurring situations in the school and family setting and makes them the core of the language program. The paper presents sample noun-based and verb-based lessons and asserts that given the declining proportion of students now entering school with some ability to talk Navajo, immersion is the only type of program that will enable them to acquire enough Navajo to join the adult Navajo world. It also asserts that such programs will have to concentrate heavily on preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. Teachers of these immersion programs must know both Navajo and English to understand the kinds of problems that English speakers will likely have with Navajo. The paper discusses how formulae, gestures, meta-Navajo, survival Navajo, and background Navajo are needed in situational programs. It presents characteristics of situational Navajo (a focus on verbs, predictability, identifying verb content, and what is taught) and explains how to teach situationally (e.g., thinking/talking aloud, talking "verbfully," and reception/production). It describes how to organize for instruction, focusing on verb-based instruction and practice. Two appendixes present a teaching technique for situational Navajo and eliciting techniques. (SM)

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A School-Based, Verb-Centered Way of Teaching Navajo

Wayne Holm, Irene Silentman, Laura Wallace

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Situational Navajo:
A School-Based, Verb-Centered Way of Teaching Navajo

Wayne Holm, Irene Silentman, Laura Wallace

Those who work in Indian-controlled school programs have had to learn that, in talking to educators in other programs, what we see as a 'solution' in our situation may well be seen as a 'disaster' in someone else's situation. We have had to learn not to tell others 'the' way—our way—to do things. Instead, we begin by explaining our situation in some detail. We explain why we do what we do. We talk about our successes and failures to date; we may talk about our residual problems. But we leave it to our listeners to decide how their situation is similar to (and different from) ours—and what parts of our program they may decide to try or reject.

This is also true of Native-language immersion programs. What works in one situation may or may not work in others. A native-language immersion program must come to terms with, among other things, the structure of the language they are trying to teach. Navajo is very much a verb-centered language. Navajo verbs are intricately complex. But they are absolutely necessary. We have struggled to find ways to make Navajo verbs accessible to non- or limited-Navajo-speaking students. Our approach may or may not be useful to those who are trying to teach other languages. Their program must give their children access to the crucial features of their languages.

Two Demonstrations

We realized only after submitting this paper for publication that it is probably necessary to give readers some sort of 'feel' for what we're talking about. In oral presentations, we have often prefaced the longer expository portions of this paper with two brief demonstrations.

A noun-based calendar lesson

In the first demonstration, Laura usually takes a small group of adults from the audience to act as students (These may or may not be Navajo-speakers; she has done this both ways). She brings them in close to her to teach what we have come to call "the calendar lesson." Using a mockup of an 'enriched' calendar, she leads them through the months of the year, the days of the week, and the numbers of the dates. The 'children' respond energetically and in chorus. They may go on to colors, directions, shapes and the like. And, if they are Navajo-speakers, she may take them on to clothing, body-parts, age/gender terms; she may take them on to kinship terms and Navajo place names.

The 'students' usually respond well. They are 'interested.' They respond readily—and in chorus. They are getting feedback that tells them they are doing well. At the end of this lesson, we usually ask the audience what they thought of

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this lesson. Some give cautious approval. Some are quite impressed. Some—as at Bozeman—tell us quite candidly that this was not a very good lesson. And if they don't tell us, we tell them: this was intended to demonstrate a 'bad' lesson. Laura is a good teacher; she can make even a bad lesson look good. But this lesson didn't give children any real ability to **communicate**, We gave them very very limited ability to communicate *their* needs or reactions to others. We only gave them some ability to label (with nouns) and maybe to describe (with neuter verbs). The reason that even non-speakers do as well as they often do with this lesson is because, for them, they are basically reading text—even if they don't understand what they are saying.

A verb-based lesson

In the second demonstration, Irene also takes a small group of adults to act as 'student-learners.' Here it's better if most in this group are non-Navajo-speakers. She teaches a very small portion of the Navajo 'handling verb' system. (In Navajo, there is no generic verb for 'to give.' In asking that someone transfer (an) object(s) to you, you are forced to use one of perhaps a dozen verb stems that have to do with the shape of the object: small-bulky, thin-rigid, flat-flexible, open-contained, etc.

In Irene's lesson, she might start with two classroom objects. Say a pencil and a sheet of paper. These require the slender-rigid and flat-flexible stems. She might lead students to say the equivalent of '(object) to-me you-give' with the two stems. If they do well, she might lead them to the reciprocal '(object) to-you I-give.' We might end by having each student both request the two objects in turn and also give the objects requested by another student to that student while saying that s/he is doing so (The names of the objects are not necessarily important. The Navajo names of a number of common classroom objects are relatively complex nominalized verb-phrases—descriptions. We can pronominalize them or we can say them in English. The important thing is that the children begin to respond to the stems: to 'see' or 'feel' the shape of the action being talked about).

Unlike the earlier lesson, this is not necessarily a 'fun' or an 'easy' lesson. By lesson's end, each student is expected to 'perform his/her competence.' At the end of a 'good' lesson with a 'good' group, the students may have learned only four short verb-sentences: two commands and two action-related responses. If they were non-Navajo-speakers, they still have had to work hard to do so. Their command of these four verb-sentences is still shaky.

But, when we ask the participants for their reactions to *this* lesson, most respond that they feel that they have actually acquired some small ability to communicate. And they see that, if this were kept manageable and they felt supported by the teacher, they could continue to build on this in the days to come. It is this satisfaction of self-perceived mastery that is so often overlooked as a powerful motivator in second language learning. This, then, is the experiential background with which we hope you will approach the expository portion of this paper that follows.

Where We Are At

Given the declining proportion of students now entering school with some ability to talk Navajo, it appears to us that *only* immersion-type programs have any hope of enabling these students to acquire enough Navajo to join the adult Navajo language-world. And, given the growing demands of state "standards," it appears that such programs are going to have to concentrate heavily on pre-school, kindergarten, and maybe the first grade. What we are calling here "situational Navajo" might be the core of Navajo Language programs at those levels.

In the end, it's a question of what we really want for our children. If all we want for our children is to 'appreciate' (the relative difficulty of?) Navajo or to 'know a few phrases' in Navajo, then any Navajo-as-a-Second-Language program will probably do. But if we are serious about having our children learn to actually communicate in Navajo, then nothing short of full immersion seems likely to succeed. Some suggestions to help teachers to "stay in Navajo" and provide an immersion experience for their students are given in Appendix A.

In an immersion program, we attempt to recreate, for a given length of time and in a school setting, the situation in which their Navajo Language teachers acquired Navajo as their first language. In that situation, as children, they needed Navajo to communicate with those they lived among and loved.

We cannot recreate that situation in full. Most of our students already have a language—English. These students are already able to communicate in that language. We can recreate only *part* of that situation by **creating a situation in which the students *need* Navajo to communicate**. As Joshua Fishman told us repeatedly in his oral presentations here on Navajo, if we want our children to become able to communicate *naturally* in Navajo, we are going to have to do some *unnatural* things—in order to make up for lost time in radically different circumstances.

There are those who say that having students go to school all in Navajo (at least in the lowest grades) is to simply reverse the situation in which their monolingual Navajo parents/grandparents were forced to go to school in English only. But it is not that simple. In that earlier situation, in which Navajo students went to school in English only, students and teachers could barely understand one another: few students began with any English and few teachers knew any Navajo. Students were able to communicate with their teachers only to the extent that they had learned the English needed to do so. That was 'submersion'; it was sink or swim. And, academically, many of those students did not learn to swim very well or very far.

In current 'immersion' programs, the teachers know both Navajo and English. They know the kinds of problems that English-speakers are likely to have with Navajo. Unlike the (mostly) Anglo teachers that taught only in English, these teachers understand what the students are saying in English; they understand what the students are trying to say, in Navajo. They simply refrain from using—or responding to—English with the students.

Then too in the earlier 'submersion' programs, the students were *compelled* to go to school in English; there was no choice. Most students were away from home—sometimes quite far from home. But all contemporary 'immersion' programs are programs of choice. Parents choose to place their children in such programs; they can remove them at any time. And most of these children go home every afternoon.

Situational Navajo

"Situational Navajo" is simply one kind of immersion program. It is "situational" because it takes many of the recurring situations in the school setting—and hopefully in (extended) family settings as well—and makes those the core of the Navajo Language program. We use many of these situations as opportunities to use and learn Navajo.

At the pre-school/kindergarten/1st grade, this may be the 'core' interpersonal communication component of a more comprehensive Navajo Immersion program. We may add singing, word-play, and the like. We may add verb-centered (pre-)reading and (pre-)math instruction; we may teach to (some of) "the standards." But the verb-based interpersonal communication would be the core of the total program. We deal only with that interpersonal communication 'core' in this paper.

Situational Navajo might be the stand-alone Navajo Immersion component of an otherwise English-language elementary-level program. For a given period of time each day, we would conduct class all in Navajo—focusing on verb-centered interpersonal communication. This will not be as effective as "full immersion" instruction, but it should be much more effective—and more useful—than most Navajo-as-a-Second-Language instruction at this level.

At the junior high/senior high level, we might use situational methods to convert otherwise book-based instruction into immersion instruction. Again, for a given period of time, we would conduct class all in Navajo. The book-based instruction would be placed in an interpersonal matrix of oral Navajo.

At its simplest, "situational Navajo" simply means 'using' the recurring situations in the school day as opportunities to teach or practice verb-based phrases or sentences. We say 'use' advisedly; this doesn't 'just happen.' We work hard to organize and conduct instruction to get the most meaningful talk we can out of these situations.

Other kinds of language

Before talking about some of the nuts-and-bolts of situational instruction and practice, we need to talk about some of the other kinds of instructional language that are needed in a situational program. Here we will talk about "formulae," "gestures," "meta-Navajo," "survival Navajo," and (for lack of a better term) "background Navajo." The distinctions may be somewhat arbitrary; they

are intended to try to get teachers to try to think critically about the language they use to guide instruction.

To put it rather bluntly: if teachers talk 'over the student's heads,' students are going to 'tune out.' In self defense, they come to perceive the teacher's talk as just so much 'static.' To keep the students 'tuned in' with them, teachers really have to think about and control what they say.

1. Formulae: There are going to be situations where the student needs to say things to the teacher that the student hasn't learned to say in Navajo yet. There needs to be formulae by which a student is enabled to communicate successfully in Navajo. One such formula is the one used early on in the Navajo Immersion program at Fort Defiance:

- The student says to the teacher, "Shiká anilyeed" ('Help me')
- The teacher acknowledges that s/he has heard the student.
- The student makes his/her request in English.
- The teacher 'chunks' the child's request into short Navajo phrases.
- The child repeats these phrases (in Navajo).
- Only then does the teacher respond to the child's utterance.

The unspoken message is 'Here things get done through Navajo—and only through Navajo.' No nagging. No preaching. This is conveyed by actions, not by words; this is simply the way things are done hereabouts.

Of course, other formulae are possible. But what we need to establish, early on, is that (almost) all communication will be in Navajo, and we need to give students a way of communicating when their Navajo is not yet adequate to meet their immediate needs.

To take the risks required for successful second language acquisition/learning, the students have to trust their teacher. The teacher has to earn their trust. The teacher has to 'be there' for the students—in Navajo; the students have to sense that the teacher will 'be there' for them—in Navajo.

In time, as students learn more Navajo, they become wiser about ways of obtaining assistance. They may learn to compress or 'chunk' their English requests. If they know the teacher will support their efforts, they may try what they know is less-than-perfect Navajo. They may, in time, learn to ask just for the word/phrase they need: saying (in Navajo) 'How do you say X'—where X is the English word/phrase for which they are seeking an equivalent. Or they may learn to go to another, more knowledgeable, student first.

We are not language 'purists.' As noted earlier, the Navajo terms for a number of common classroom objects are relatively complex descriptions. Many contemporary foods do not have even commonly-accepted descriptions. We have no problem with students—intent on communicating—using some English nouns in otherwise Navajo sentences. After all, English accepts thousands of nouns from other languages without ceasing to be English. But we *do* have problems with students using English verbs in place of Navajo verbs—or of combining the two.

2. Gestures: At the beginning, students may not understand the directions the teacher gives to elicit, or direct, the child(ren)'s production of Navajo—what we call 'meta-Navajo.' This happens in all second-language learning: the learners have difficulty distinguishing between the content and the directions; the learners repeat both:

- Teacher: "Here I am." You say that.
- Student: "Here I am; you say that."

It helps, particularly at the outset, to develop a set of gestures to help students with gestures for such directions as: "Wait," "Listen," "Watch my mouth," "Repeat (after me)." "[Tell me] more." Also such things as "Tell me" or "Ask him."

As time goes on and the students become better able to sort out the instructional content from the meta-Navajo directions, the teacher would do well to discontinue using gestures. After all, in the end, we want the students to become able to respond to the oral meta-Navajo *without* the gestures: to use (Navajo) language to help learn (Navajo) language.

3. 'Meta-Navajo': We need to be able to use Navajo to direct the students' Navajo talk. At first, we must relay heavily on gestures (above). But, as teachers, we need to find ways of giving directions to students about what to do/say without having to revert to English. 'Meta-Navajo,' then, is the Navajo used by the teacher to direct the Navajo obtained from the students; just those Navajo phrases that are used (frequently) to elicit Navajo from the students. These may be simple:

- speech-related commands like: "Say [what I say]"; "Repeat [what I said]"; "[Say it] again"; "[Talk] louder"; "[Say it more] carefully"; etc.
- directions like: "Tell me"; "Ask him"; etc.
- questions used to elicit given forms, like: "What are you doing?" "What is s/he doing?"; "What is this [action/thing] called?"; etc.

As Navajo language teachers we need to consciously select the meta-Navajo phrases that we will use, explicitly teach them early on, and be fairly consistent (particularly at the outset) about using the same forms.

4. Survival or interactional Navajo: Teachers need to ask things of students and students have to say things to the teacher(s) that do not necessarily involve the whole group (at least not all at the same time). These are not situational Navajo; they have to do with individual needs/wants and (at first) they usually involve only the use of the 1 sg [singular] ("I") forms. These might have to do with:

- recurring but individual situations: sharpening a pencil, getting a drink, going to the restroom, looking for a lost item, etc.
- sickness, discomfort, or pain: a headache, a runny nose, a cold, an injury, etc.

• feelings: tiredness, homesickness, appreciation, etc.

At first, the teacher may simply teach the necessary 1 sg ("I") forms of survival phrases. But, as the students acquire more Navajo, and it becomes apparent that more students need a given verb, the teacher may teach other forms of that verb—for example, the 2 sg ("you-one") or the 3 sg ("s/he") forms. In this way, the students begin to get some insight into the structure of the previously unanalyzed forms; what had been 'survival Navajo' is now taught more systematically as 'situational Navajo.'

5. 'Background Navajo': We probably need a better term but, for now, let's use the term 'background Navajo.' In an immersion situation, restricting ourselves to just that Navajo the students can say can lead to a relatively sterile language-learning environment. Most good immersion teachers are able to closely control the language they expect the students to fully understand and respond to. But many good immersion teachers also talk a good bit of what we're calling 'background Navajo': language which is situationally appropriate but which the students are not expected to fully understand or explicitly respond to. This may be approbation, this may be encouragement, this may be further explanation, this may be 'chatter'; the students sense it as supportive 'background.' The students may 'get the drift' because of the situation, but they may not—and are not fully expected to—fully comprehend or respond to the actual wording.

Good 'background Navajo' is a balancing act. If there is no 'background Navajo,' the environment may seem too language drill-like; it may become a little too stressful. But if there is too much 'background Navajo,' or students can't tell the difference between what they are expected to attend/respond to and what is simply 'background Navajo, they may become inattentive.

The Navajo educator Anita Bradley Pfeiffer pointed out (in observations at Rock Point many years ago) that second language learners cannot be expected to 'attend' to all that is said all the time. In a harmonious teacher-student relationship, the students sense when to attend intently and when they may relax a bit. This can seem, she said, as natural as breathing: inhale - exhale - inhale.... Good immersion teachers are able to communicate rather clearly to students when the students are expected to attend/respond to what the teacher is saying and when what the teacher is saying is just 'background.' This may signaled by tone of voice; it may be signaled by slowing down and speaking more deliberately; it may be signaled by eye-contact. However, it is signaled, and the students of a good immersion teacher usually sense which is which.

Good 'background Navajo' is not necessarily lost. Good background Navajo makes for a more natural language environment. And it may contribute to developing the latent Navajo language abilities of the students.

Characteristics of Situational Navajo

Having gone through all the other kinds of language that are used in Navajo language teaching, we are at last ready to discuss the characteristics of situational Navajo. Situational Navajo may be thought of as a way of trying to orga-

nize instruction to give students a growing sense of how Navajo verbs work by giving them incremental mastery of specific verbs that are needed for communicating needs/wants.

1. A focus on verbs: Impressionistically, the English language-world seems to be a world of things: things do things or things happen to things. The Navajo language-world seems much more "a world in motion": everything is moving, even if some things are (temporarily) at rest.

Navajo is a language of verbs. But Navajo verbs are difficult. As a result, many teachers—and students—avoid verbs. They teach students mostly concrete nouns, maybe some abstract nouns, and maybe a few (adjective-like) neuter verbs. But with just these words, students can only point and/or describe. They can't really communicate much information that their native-speaker listeners don't already know. If we want students to become able to communicate through Navajo, we are going to have to enable them to use verbs for communication.

2. 'Predictability': Navajo verbs are complex—often very complex. The final element is usually the verb stem—the element that specifies the general 'shape' of the action. But preceding the stem are a large number of prefixes, each one specifying a little more about the shape of the action. These prefixes go together in analyzable but complex ways; the sounds of these prefixes are compressed and/or altered; there are a number of sound changes or deletions that often seem to mask the underlying forms.

Navajo verbs are intricately regular. The great linguist/ lexicographer Robert Young has said in oral presentations at Diné College that there may be no more than 18-21 regular conjugations—no more, he says, than in Spanish. But there are also a much larger number of morpho-phonemic rules that govern how those prefixes are combined. Given one form of a verb, learners of Spanish can often 'predict' many of the other forms of that verb. This is much harder for learners of Navajo; given one form of a verb, it maybe rather difficult to predict many of the other forms of that verb. And because, in a sense, many Navajo verbs are sentence-like, some individuals may come up with slightly different forms of what seems to be the same verb (They may be thought to be following slightly different rules, or to be applying those rules in slightly different order).

Yet in the long run, this is what we want our students to be able to do: to make good guesses about verb-forms they may have never heard. To 'know' a language means—in some sense—that one has so internalized the underlying 'system' of the language that one can (often) produce (correctly) sentences one has never heard (Remember: Navajo verbs are often sentence-like). Students learn to talk Navajo not so much by *hearing* Navajo as much as by *trying to talk* Navajo—and getting supportive feedback. They learn to talk Navajo by making guesses—correct guesses more often than incorrect guesses—about regular and not-so-regular forms.

3. Identifying verb content: Here we will talk about how we select what verbs to teach and what forms of that verb we will teach. In practical terms, this emphasis on verbs strongly suggests that **we identify—for a given school situ-**

ation—*the* verb that seems to be most useful in that situation (This might be washing hands, it might be hanging up coats, it might be writing one's name, it might be asking for food, etc., etc., etc.).

We identify a situation in which we think it important that the children become able to talk and respond; we pick out the one verb that we think will be most useful in that situation. We can add other verbs later on: verbs that contrast with or supplement the first verb. But for starters we identify one most useful verb (Nouns—or neuter verbs—can be taught in the context of verb-ful sentences; teaching nouns or neuter verbs in isolation is of little value unless they can be fitted in to verb-ful sentences).

Navajo has a number of modes—Navajo modes are something like tenses in English and Spanish. In the beginning, we will work almost entirely with verbs in the imperfective mode—with forms in which it is not specified that the action has been completed. These are the forms of most face-to-face here-and-now interaction in Navajo. These are the forms with which one gets things done in Navajo. In contrast, one of the problems with approaches based on writing/reading 'stories' is that the verbs are usually in the *perfective* mode—the forms with which one gives accounts of what happened *after* they happened. These are not the forms of most use in face-to-face interaction. Dialog-based materials may be an exception. **We need to explore ways of concentrating on imperfective forms** and of deferring most perfective or more-distant future forms—not to speak of iterative, semeliterative, usitative, or optative forms—until later on.

Most Navajo verbs may be thought of as having ten/twelve basic forms in a given mode-and-aspect. It doesn't seem to make much sense to try to try to teach all twelve forms of each verb at the outset—some forms are not used very frequently.

	singular	**dual**	**plural**
1st person	"I"	"we-two"	"we-three-or- more
2nd	"you-one"	"you-two"	"you three-or-more
3rd	"he/she/it"	"they-two"	they-three-or-more"
4th	"one"	(oblique) "they-two"	(oblique) "they-three-or-more"

Example: 'to wash' (an object, such as hands)

1st person	tánásgis	tánéiigis	táádeiigis
2nd	táán(í)gis	tánáhgis	táádaohgis
3rd	tánéígis	tánéígis	táádeigis
4th	táájígis	táájígis	táádajigis

So, **we might do well at the outset to limit ourselves to just the three forms shown in the box**: the 1 sg ("I") form, the 2 sg ("you-one") form, and the 3 sg ("s/he") form. It may be useful, for some verbs, later on, to teach the 1 plural and 2 pl forms: these are used when the teacher gives commands to a class and the class respond as a group. The so-called 4th person forms are not much used by limited speakers except in set phrases. Neither are the dual forms; and many

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dual forms can be 'predicted' by removing the da- prefix from plural forms. So we might limit our initial teaching to just three of the possible ten/ twelve forms.

But most Navajo verbs involving the motion of people take different stems for the singular, dual, and plural. These include verbs for such actions as coming in (an entrance), sitting down, lying down, standing up, walking, running, and (by extension) helping. We can often set aside the dual and the 4th person forms as less commonly used; but we may still have to initially teach at least six of the twelve possible forms:

'to go'	**singular**	**dual**	**plural**
1st person	déyá	deet'áázh	deekai
2nd person	díníyá	dishoo'áázh	disoohkai
3rd person	deeyá	deezh'áázh	deeskai
4th person	jideeyá	jideezh'áázh	jideeskai

In Situational Navajo, we try to select high-utility forms of those verbs. Utility is the criterion. Where possible, we select verbs that can be used for a number of related situations. We try to avoid forms that can refer to a relatively limited or uncommon actions: we try to select forms that can apply to a number of different situations. For example, we might select a transitive form of the verb 'to wash (X)' because it can be used not only with washing hands but with other body parts and other objects as well.[1] We might select a form of the verb 'to make (X)' as in 'to make (i.e. write) one's name because the verb 'to make' can be used much more widely than the verb meaning (only) to write (A time may come when we will be able to identify some of the verbs most needed in school-like settings, analyze the paradigms those verbs take, and then try to group together verbs taking similar paradigms to facilitate generalizations. We're not ready for that yet).

Navajo verb forms supply a great deal of information specifying the shape of the action. Fluent speakers tend to analyze actions semiconsciously. But unless Navajo Language teachers carefully monitor which forms they use, they may slip into so many different situation-specific forms that few students will sense the underlying regularities. Instead of saying "He's washing his hands," the teacher might say, "He's washing his hands again" or "He repeatedly washes his hands" or "He washed his hands." For this reason, we have found that **it helps the teacher to actually write out the paradigm of the verb s/he intends to teach**. Not for the children but to enable the teacher to keep from 'slipping off-paradigm.' To help the teacher use fairly consistently the forms that are most likely to lead the students to 'sense' the way that verb works.

4. <u>What we teach</u>: We do not teach students to 'conjugate verbs' as such. We do want them—more like native speakers—to 'sense' or 'feel' which verb

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[1]But, it turns out, only with 'impermeable' objects like hands, face, dishes, etc.; not with 'permeable' objects like clothes that require a different conjugation.

goes with *my* doing the action, with the person I'm talking *to* doing the action, or with some third person I'm talking *about* doing the action. This is built up by having considerable and varied experience in using the appropriate forms while *the action is actually going on*.

We want students to be able to do more than just answer the questions we having considerable and varied experience in using the appropriate forms while *the action is actually going on*.ask. Of course we want them to do that; but we want them to be able to do much more. At the very least, we want students to be able—for a growing number of high-utility verbs—to be able to:

- make simple statements in all three persons:
  He's washing his hands.
- negate simple statements in all three persons:
  He's not washing his hands.
- ask aoo'/dooda-type questions in all three persons:
  Is NAME washing his hands?
- answer aoo'/dooda-type questions in all three persons:
  Yes, s/he's washing his/her hands.
- correct mistaken aoo'/dooda-type questions in all three persons:
  No, s/he's not washing his *face* ; s/he's washing his/her *hands*.
  No, *John's* not washing his hands; *Mary's* washing her hands.
- ask ha-type questions
  that query the actor:
  Who's washing his/her hands?
  to answer such a question:
  NAME is washing his/her hands.
  that, in some cases, query the object:
  What's s/he washing?
  to answer such a question:
  He's washing his *hands*.

Note that the generalized questions: *What am I doing? What are you doing? What is s/he doing?* are considered to be meta-Navajo—they can be used with any demonstratable verb.

In time, we may teach students some of the simpler ways of relating or combining two sentences. But the ability to use the simple sentence-types noted above will give students considerable ability to converse and communicate.

Teaching situationally

We make a basic distinction between what we call verb-based **'instruction'** and verb-based **'practice'** or 'use.' In the one we concentrate on consciously teaching the use of two or more verb-forms. In the other, we try to exploit recurring situations during the day to practice the forms we have just been teaching. But before we discuss these two basic activities in more detail, we need to talk about some of the characteristics about teaching situationally.

1. Thinking/talking out loud: Some would say that there is a tendency in everyday Navajo life to focus on getting things done (right) with a minimum of talk about those actions as we do them. And some would say that there is a tendency in everyday Navajo life to avoid doing things in public—including talking—that one does not do well. Carried into Navajo language classrooms, these attitudes can lead to semi-verbal or almost nonverbal classrooms. In these classrooms, teachers—or aides—tend to set up for academic-type instruction as quickly—and as non-verbally—as possible. Getting ready for such instruction may not seem important; it's the 'real' (academic) instruction that they see as being important. The classroom routine may be pretty much the same day after day. So they may just gesture to tell the students what they are to do next. Or they may literally move the first child to get the others to follow on. We expect those students who do not know what to do next to follow those students who do. Or, when all else fails, these people may give very brief oral instructions—in English.

These attitudes and actions actually make it *more* difficult for students to acquire Navajo in a school setting. If we are really serious about enabling students to acquire/learn Navajo situationally, we're going to have to bracket or suspend such actions. Instead, we are going to have to take Navajo language learning as important—maybe more important—than the academic content. Every activity can be exploited for its language-instruction or language-practice potential. It turns out that the language of 'getting things done' is often more 'real' and more 'useful' than print-based language instruction. We have to learn to exploit these recurring situations for their language-learning/-practice potential.

We learn to talk by talking. We learn to attend—listen intently—when we are mentally preparing to respond with talk and/or action. We have to turn our classes into talking classes. Everything we do there is something we *could* talk about. The real problem is not finding something to talk about but deciding which things to teach—and practice—now, and which things we may have to let go until later. We have to concentrate on a few things at a time, teaching them and practicing them well. Then, while continuing to practice those things, we can concentrate on new things, constantly accumulating more language and more 'feel' for how the language works.

2. Talking 'verb-fully': A corollary of talking about what we are doing as we do it is that we focus on verbs. We are not concerned with Miss Fidditch's insistence that we talk in "complete sentences" or "full thoughts." In Navajo (as in, say, Spanish) it is possible to make sentences without separate subjects or objects; these can be contained as pronomial elements within the verb phrase. We are talking about giving students lots of meaningful practice with verb-forms to help them acquire a 'feel' for the appropriate forms in given situations.

When a native-speaker responds to a question with Aoo' or Ndaga' or even a one-noun answer, we assume that the speaker could, if need be, supply the appropriate verb forms and whatever else may have been 'deleted' or left out. Other native-speakers will understand what has been 'deleted' but is 'implied.' But this is not necessarily the case with second-language-learners of Navajo.

They may not be able to supply what has been deleted—which often includes the verb-form. These learners need lots and lots of practice in coming up with the right verb-forms. So we insist that students respond—in all but the most trivial cases—using a phrase/sentence with a verb-form. (Once learners become reasonably proficient, they are able (in more natural out-of-class situations) to 'delete' as native speakers do.)

3. 'Response-ability': When a native speaker of Navajo is asked to do something, s/he may acknowledge in some way that s/he has heard the speakers. But s/he is not too likely to state explicitly that s/he is performing that action while doing so. It seems 'unnatural' to do so. But the real strength of the situational approach is that **talk and actions are coordinated**. Students come to 'sense' which form to use because it 'feels' right. So when we ask a student to do something, we expect the student to *say* what s/he is doing. If we ask a question, we expect the student to respond with a statement containing the appropriate form of the verb. The same is true in instructional or practice where one student commands or questions another. This may seem 'unnatural' to the teacher. But they will accept it if the teacher is consistent, keeps things manageable, and is supportive.

Incidentally, part of 'survival Navajo' should include what a student should say if 'caught napping.' We should (almost) always expect a student called upon to respond. We teach the students requests such as: "Would you repeat?" comments such as "I don't understand" or "I don't understand X," and excuses such as "I wasn't listening." If sitting tight and saying nothing gets you out of such situations, we shouldn't be surprised if more and more students do so. We should actively 'expect' an answer from a student called upon. This means waiting until s/he can formulate one. This is not 'punishment'; it is simply 'communication.'

4. Reception/production: We also make a distinction between language we expect students to respond to and language we expect students to produce themselves. As will be seen below, we might give a 2 sg ("you-one") command to students to perform a given action on one day. We would expect the students to respond with the appropriate action and a 1 sg ("I") statement that they are performing the action. We would not, at this stage, expect them to *produce* the 2 sg ("you-one") form, only to *respond* to it. But in the next session, we might move on to have the students command one another using the 2 sg ("you-one") form. Having responded to this is previous sessions, this should not be perceived as completely 'new.'

5. Contrast/choice: In the earliest stages of presenting a new form or new material, we may have students simply repeat what we model. But we want to move fairly quickly into situations where we are *contrasting* one verb-form with at least one another. We manage the situation so that students show us whether they (probably) understand the contrast by making an appropriate choice. This may be as simple as using the 1 sg ("I" form of the verb when carrying out an action one has been commanded to do but using the 2 sg ("you-one") form when commanding another student to carry out this same action. We build up three-way (and larger) contrasts incrementally, by introducing only one new verb-

form at a time and contrasting it with those forms already taught. We think that **the importance of this incremental buildup by two-way contrasts cannot be overestimated.** A frequent response to adults-as-learners of another language in demonstrations in Christine Sims stimulating cross-language workshops is, "You were trying to teach us too much!" While students may master initial three- or four-way contrasts over a number of sessions, not all students are likely to do so in a single short session. In more school-like settings, this is likely to lead to unnecessary student frustration.

The same principle is at play in introducing new vocabulary. Where possible, we should introduce nouns—or neuter verbs—in the context of known verbs. For example, once having learned the forms of the verb to handle a solid bulky object, we might introduce the words for 'ball' and maybe 'book.' And, later on, maybe the words for 'red' and 'yellow'—and the words for 'large' and 'small.' Thus, we would (eventually) teach object-names, colors, sizes, etc. But we would do so in the context of verb forms for 'object small-bulky at rest,' 'picking up small-bulky object,' 'setting down' small-bulky object, 'giving small-bulky object,' etc. These neuter verbs would become useful in specifying *which* objects one wants moved. In isolation, these neuter verb-forms are practically useless.

Organizing for instruction

In teaching situationally, we distinguish between two basic activities: **verb-based 'instruction'** and **verb-based 'practice'** or 'use.' We may select a given verb that we think important and work on that for a week. We set some time aside each day to '**instruct**' students in forms of that verb, cumulatively building up their mastery of the forms of that verb. And every time a situation can be used—or contrived—which requires that verb, we have students '**practice**' one or more of the forms we have been teaching. In a sense, the 'instruction' is more like theory; the 'practice' more like application. We want students to go back and forth between theory and application—between 'instruction' and 'practice.'

We also have to provide for on-going review of verbs already taught. From time-to-time, we need to review (or reteach) certain verbs that were taught in earlier 'instruction' sessions. And, from time-to-time, we need to provide for review of verbs used in the 'practice' sessions.

As the year goes on, students should begin to accumulate facility with a growing number of verbs in a growing number of situations. Part of the teacher's role is to keep adding to that accumulation while providing on-going practice and review of verbs taught earlier.

Verb-based instruction

We suggest setting aside a certain time or times each day in which we explicitly teach verb-forms. The length of these sessions would vary with the age and background of the children. With younger children, it might be better to have several shorter periods. This should be done earlier in the day, when the students are still fresh. Groups should be small; if there is an aide, the aide can

either act as a second teacher or conduct other activities that allow the teacher to work with smaller groups (If the teacher and the aide 'team-teach,' then they can model both 'parts' of an exchange, and the one can 'coach' the children's responses to the other). We want to be able to check—at (almost) every step along the way—that each student can do what we are expected all to do. It is extremely important that we seriously try to "leave no kids behind"—no lambs either.

In the simplest form of a verb-based unit, as taught to non-speakers at the preschool level:

- We might teach the 1 sg ("I") form on Monday. Once we have taught this, we might elicit it from the students in a number of different ways: gestures, commands, questions, etc. But all that the students would actually have to say in that first session would be the 1 sg ("I") form. Before we quit, we should test each student's ability to do so.
- We might teach the 2 sg ("you-one") form on Tuesday. The students may have been expected to *respond* to this form in their responses to 2 sg ("you-one") commands and questions on Monday. But they weren't actually expected to *produce* the 2 sg ("you-one") form—yet. Now, on Tuesday, we might expect them to *produce* the 2 sg ("you-one") form. And to contrast the 1 sg ("I") form with the 2 sg ("you-one") form in a number of different sentence-types: responses, commands, questions, etc. Again, before we quit, we should test each student's ability to use *both* forms appropriately.
- We might introduce the 3 sg ("s/he") forms on Wednesday. We might have student one (S1) give a command to student two (S2) and have S2 mime the action while saying what s/he is doing. The teacher might then ask the group, "What is S2 doing?" and then lead them to say, "S/he is X-ing." But we have learned working at Lukachukai, and it may be better to postpone a close three-way contrast until the following day.
- On Thursday then, we might move to a close three-way contrast. S1 commands S2, using the 2sg ("you one") form. S2 mimes the action and responds, using the 1sg ("I") form. Student three (S3), asked by the teacher (or S1) what S2 is doing, responds with the 3sg ("s/he") form. This requires very close attention. If the three way contrast collapses, the teacher may have to go back and build it up as a series of two-way contrasts.
- Head Start runs on a four day week. But in other situations, a Friday session can be used to give additional practice on the three-way contrast of verb forms, introduce appropriate nouns or neuter verbs, and review (and reteach if necessary) in a relatively systematic way verbs taught earlier.

In sum, there are simpler and more difficult ways of eliciting verb-forms in given persons. We *don't* want to limit this all to teacher-ask-and-student(s)-respond(s). We also want to have students ask; we want students to learn to initiate. Part of becoming a good immersion teacher is learning many ways of eliciting given forms and making this elicitation appear relatively natural.

Characteristics of verb-based instruction

We will talk briefly about specific eliciting techniques in the Appendix B. But before we discuss verb-based 'practice,' we would like to make several additional points about the conduct of verb-based instruction.

1. Realism: We want the students' talk to be meaningful. And we want to get as much meaningful talk from the students as possible. But by "meaningful," we mean plausible: that the language fits the (imagined) situation of the speakers. Some teachers become so intent on what they think of as realism that they set up elaborate time-consuming situations out of which they get only a little student-talk. These are not very efficient. Setting up the situation may take more time than the actual talking; and usually only a few students actually get to talk. Too much 'realism' can actually distract from language learning. For example, students being taught computation with pieces of candy may become more interested in getting some candy than in learning either language or computation.

On the other hand, some people become so intent on giving the students lots of 'practice' that they allow that practice to devolve into mere repetition of what the teacher—or other students—just said. That is not *meaningful* practice. We constantly have to find a balance between 'realism' and 'practice.' It's usually better to find ways to have students 'act out' actions symbolically—to mime the actions—in ways that are reasonably meaningful but which allow considerable practice for all.

2. Participation: At the Linguistic Institute at the University of New Mexico in 1995, Berkeley language-educator Lily Wong Fillmore showed and commented on a number of classroom videos. One of these involved a contrast between a relatively open classroom in which the teacher worked one-on-one writing stories from student dictation and another rather structured classroom in which students moved in groups between the teacher and the aide in oral activities in which each student in turn was expected to respond. Asked which group learned the most (second language—as shown by end-of-the-year testing), most assumed that the students in the relatively open class did. Some of the more outgoing students in that class did well, but some of the shyer students did not. In the relatively structured class, almost all students had done reasonably well. They had been *expected/ required* to talk in situations in which outgoingness /shyness was not a factor. Without necessarily being quite as structured, we do have to find ways to assess what we have tried to teach (almost every day)—and proceed on the basis of that assessment.

In the instruction sessions we try to end almost all lessons by setting up little test-situations that require each student in the group 'perform' what has been taught. In the little during-the-day practices, we also expect each student to 'perform' what has been taught.

It is one thing to 'say' that we expect every student to learn. It is another to actually do so. The actions are ever so much more powerful than the words. We have to select what is really important. We have to 'chunk' it so that all can learn it. We have to actually check to see if all have learned it. And if some have not,

we have to find other, more effective, ways to teach it. Again, self-perceived success is a very powerful motivator. Too many students don't experience it often enough to come to expect it.

3. Expectations of success: One of Lily Wong Fillmore's studies was described above. We feel very strongly that teachers should not only *expect* all students to succeed, they should also organize and conduct instruction so that the students *actually do master* each day's objective—or if they don't, that the teacher comes back in the next session to enable them do so. Here again the teacher's actions speak so much more loudly than their words.

Some of the implications of teaching for mastery in the verb-based 'instruction' sessions are as follows. Teachers should:

- select verbs that they think are the most important;
- start the lesson with an explicit objective: what is it that they actually expect each student to be able to do by the end of this lesson?
- make it clear—by their actions—that they actually *expect* each student to master the material taught that day (In time the students come to realize that if they as a group have not mastered the material, the teacher is going to give them more time/assistance);
- present material incrementally in small 'chunks';
- lead students to sense contrast and to choose;
- teach in ways that all students get relatively meaningful practice;
- teach in ways that enable the teacher to tell—at each stage—if all the students are 'getting it';
- continually adjust their presentation on the basis of this feedback;
- by the end of the lesson, assess—formally or informally—that each student has achieved the objective of that lesson;
- plan the next lesson(s) on the basis of what how well the previous lesson(s) went.

4. Assessment: Some teachers simply 'broadcast' questions to the class; those who (think they) know the answer respond. These teachers may not notice that only a relatively small proportion of the students are answering most of the questions; some students almost never volunteer to answer a question. While calling for volunteers may be appropriate when introducing new material, or when the teacher is trying to find out what the students as a group already know, it is inappropriate throughout language lessons.

Language learning tends to be cumulative. The less the students have mastered to date, the more difficult it is going to be for them to proceed. The teacher owes it to the students to try their best to bring *all* the students along. The teacher does this by not only having an explicit objective for the lesson but by often breaking even that objective up into even smaller 'chunks' in 'building up' mastery of the objective. The teacher assesses students' mastery of these smaller chunks as they go along and adjusts their instruction on the basis of this feedback.

This need not be overly formal testing. It can be contriving a short simple situation in which each child in turn has to use appropriately the forms being contrasted in that lesson (The teacher should *start* the lesson with this assessment in mind; most of the lesson should be involved in preparing the students to become able to do that). And if some don't, it's not the end of the world. Assessment is part of every lesson. In time, the students come to realize that if they can't do what is expected (yet), the teacher will not scold or punish them: they will be given them more time and attention until they all do achieve the objective. This is perhaps the hardest thing for new immersion teachers to do. It is often humbling to learn that, after we have worked so hard, that *some* of the students still cannot do what we said they would be able to do by the end of the lesson. We want to move faster. We would like to believe that because we have worked so hard and *some* of the students can do it, that 'they *all* know it.' But this kind of self-deception usually leads to growing confusion and discouragement on the part of those students that just don't get it.

Second language learning is difficult. Learning Navajo as a second language is particularly difficult for English-speaking children. Second language learners often tend to feel that, no matter how hard they try, they are never quite right. Breaking language-learning down into small discrete activities helps students to succeed. And perceiving themselves to be successful is important: coming to expect that they will usually succeed motivates students to learn—and to want to learn—Navajo.

We as teachers also need to succeed. If we teach any old way, many students will not progress beyond the beginner level. We, too, get discouraged. Setting small but explicit objectives, teaching toward those objectives and assessing those objectives helps both the children and the teacher succeed. This need not become 'mechanical' or 'clinical.' There is great scope for creativity in finding ways that help all students succeed. And good teachers can present lessons as a series of challenges in which most of the students succeed most of the time.

Time and space do not allow us to elaborate here all the ways in which we can have students use the forms of given verbs in statements, negations, corrections, aoo'/dooda-type questions, ha-type questions, responses, etc. This is where language teaching as engineering ends and language teaching as art begins. Good teachers can make this both challenging and fun. Students come to realize that, while this is challenging, the teacher is there for them and will assist and support them until they are able to do what is expected. While getting lots of relatively meaningful practice with specific verbs, the students are beginning to get a 'feel' for how that particular verb works and, ultimately, a sense of the underlying 'system' for many similar verbs. And the students will begin to get a 'feel' for the ways in which the basic underlying sentence patterns are transformed into negations, questions, corrections, etc.

Having a growing ability to understand and communicate in Navajo, students are better prepared to 'attend to' the Navajo around them that most had not really 'tuned in' to before. And, we hope, to start participating. That is the hope

of school-based Navajo instruction: that it will serve as a catalyst to enable students to begin to participate in the ongoing Navajo language-world around them.

Verb-based practice

We talked earlier about two kinds of activities: verb-based 'instruction' and verb-based 'practice' or 'use.' We have already discussed verb-based 'instruction'; now we will talk about verb-based 'practice' or 'use.'

We talked, in verb-based 'instruction,' about selecting a single verb form and working on at least a few of the forms of that verb for a week (or more). We teach the forms of that verb in the 'instruction' sessions. But, in addition to the 'instruction' sessions, we must also seek opportunities throughout the school day to 'practice' or 'use' the verb-forms we have been teaching. This means that every time we have an opportunity for students to use some form of that verb, we do so. We look for—sometimes we *contrive*—situations where we can have the students 'practice' one or more of those verb-forms we have been teaching in the 'instruction' sessions that week. We are looking for short simple exchanges in which we can get (at least) one form of that verb from each child *while* the action is being performed

Let's take as an example working with the verb 'to wash (one's hands).' In Head Start, there's a lot of hand-washing. There are seldom enough sinks for all; the children have to take turns. During the week that they are being instructed about that verb, these times are opportunities for teachers to conduct various kinds of exchanges with the students in line. Some examples:

- Teacher (T) COMMANDS Student (S): Wash your hands.
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS Gr TO COMMAND S: Wash your hands.
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS S TO COMMAND S AT SINK: Wash your hands.
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T ASKS S WASHING HANDS: What are you doing, NAME?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS Gr TO ASK S WASHING HANDS: What are you doing?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS S TO ASK S WASHING HANDS: What are you doing?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T ASKS S WASHING HIS HANDS: Are you washing your hands?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: Yes, I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS Gr TO ASK S WASHING HIS HANDS: Are you washing your hands?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: Yes, I'm washing my hands.
- T LEADS S TO ASK S WASHING HIS HANDS: Are you washing your hands?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: Yes, I'm washing my hands.

Here we have shown nine relatively simple exchanges: three each, based on a command, a ha-type question, and an aoo'/dooda-type question. When students become more proficient. They can begin to deal with somewhat more difficult situations such as:

- T ASKS S WASHING HIS HANDS: Are you washing your feet?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: No, I'm not washing my feet; I'm washing my hands.
- T ASKS S WASHING HIS HANDS: What are you washing?
  S RESPONDS WHILE WASHING HANDS: I'm washing my hands.
- T ASKS Gr ABOUT S WASHING HIS HANDS: Who is washing his hands?
  Gr RESPONDS: (NAME) is washing his hands.

Each of these could be asked by the teacher, by the group, or by an individual student—another nine exchanges. We have shown eighteen different ways of eliciting a 1 sg ("I) statement of students. The teacher could also lead students to ask somewhat more unusual 1 sg ("I") *questions*:

- S ASKS Gr WHILE WASHING HIS OWN HANDS: Am I washing my hands?
  Gr RESPONDS: Yes, you are washing your hands.
- S ASKS Gr WHILE WASHING HIS OWN HANDS: Am I washing my face?
  Gr RESPONDS: No, you are not washing your face; you are washing your hands.
- S ASKS Gr WHILE WASHING HIS OWN HANDS: What am I doing?
  Gr RESPONDS: You're washing your hands.
- S ASKS Gr WHILE WASHING HIS OWN HANDS: What am I washing?
  Gr RESPONDS: You're washing your hands.

Each of these is a very brief exchange in which each S is expected to utter a single sentence. Each is short and (relatively) simple. Most/all could be done in the time the students are waiting their turn to wash their hands. In this way, we continue to give students 'practice' on the verb forms that we have been working on in the 'instruction' sessions.

We have shown here more than 20 ways of eliciting just the 1 sg ("I") form. There are more, and there are as many ways of eliciting 2 sg ("you-one") and 3 sg ("s/he") forms. We could use half a dozen different ways of 'practicing' (the three forms of a given verb) every day for a week without ever repeating ourselves. While in any given activity, some students may 'catch on' that they should say from what other children have said/done, still the choice between forms and the cumulative practice should help lead them acquire a 'sense' of how that particular verb works.

Summary

In "Navajo Immersion," we attempt to recreate—to the extent that we can in a classroom setting—a situation in which the student *needs* Navajo to communicate. Not only all instruction but all interaction goes on in Navajo. "Situational Navajo" is intended as a relatively simple approach to Navajo Immersion in which we take the recurring situations that occur during the class as the curriculum. It is not necessarily a total Navajo language program, but it would be the core of such a program.

The teachers select a recurring situation in which they think it is important for their students to be able to communicate. The teachers identify the verb(s) most needed in that situation. They block out—for themselves—the imperfective paradigm of that verb, identify which forms they will teach, and when they will teach them. They then set out to teach those forms of that verb in such a way that they add only one form at a time, contrasting each new form with the forms already taught. The teachers insist that students speak verb-fully and that they use the appropriate form of the verb in all but the most trivial utterances. They lead students to use and contrast those forms in statements, negations, aoo'/dooda-type questions, ha-type questions, and responses (including corrections).

Over time, the students begin to accumulate more and more Navajo. Hopefully, they begin to 'sense' some of the regularities involved in Navajo verb formation and some of the regularities in making and transforming sentences in Navajo. These verb-forms are taught in the verb-based 'instruction' sessions in which the teachers focus on the verb being taught that week. These same verb-forms are actively expected in 'practice' situations throughout the day. Teachers use—and/or contrive—situations throughout the day in which to *practice* the forms being taught in the *instruction* sessions.

In the 'instruction' sessions, it is important that:

- the teachers have a clearcut expectation (objective) of what they expect each child to become able to do by the end of that session;
- they give all of the students varied practice with those verb forms, contrasting them with other forms of that verb and of other, related, verbs;
- at the end of the session, they assess—formally or informally—whether or not *each* child can now do what was expected;
- they plan the next lesson based on the results of the assessment of this lesson.
- This doesn't need to seem mechanical or clinical; students can be led to see this as a challenge—one in which they will, if they try, usually succeed.

In the 'practice' activities, the teachers find ways to have each child use at least one form of the verb being taught that week in a situation in which that activity is a part. These activities must be short and sweet. Well-run activities get a bit of language from every child in little more time than it would have

taken to conduct those activities non-verbally—or in English. These activities are continually varied. And actively 'expected' of each child.

In sum, then teachers try to set up "talking classrooms" in which *students talk about what they are doing as they do those things*. The emphasis is on verbs. Nouns and other parts of speech are taught in the context of verb-ful sentences. The assumption underlying "Situational Navajo" is that Navajo verbs are very difficult but absolutely necessary for meaningful communication. They are deeply and intricately regular, and it is those underlying regularities that will ultimately allow new speakers to say things they have never heard before. That is our long-range objective: to have our students become able to say things (correctly) that they have never heard. Learners are more likely to begin to 'sense' some of those regularities in situations in which the verb-forms we expect students to acquire are selected and presented and practiced in ways that make some of those regularities more accessible to students.

Note: As the Navajo Nation Language Project I, the three authors of this paper worked three summers with small groups of experienced Head Start Teachers to produce three resource books: *Situational Navajo, Interactional Navajo,* and *Instructional Navajo* (pre-arithmetic only). These are not textbooks but resource materials; teachers wanting to teach language in a given situation may find suggestions about selecting and teaching a specific verb in that situation. If we were to do this again, we would include the full paradigms in the text, and we would be more explicit about the eliciting techniques. But Navajo Immersion teachers may still find these helpful. The first book has been reprinted several times at Diné College-Tsaile. At the end of the Navajo Nation Language II project, in the fall of 2002, there were still a limited number of copies of all three books in the Office of Diné Culture, Language, and Community Services in the Division of Diné Education in Window Rock. Appendix A contains a summary of suggestions for staying in Navajo (Navajo immersion) from the 2003 *Directory of secondary Navajo language programs* published by the Navajo Nation Language Project in the Division of Diné Education that was funded by Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Grant No. 90NL0125.

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Appendix A[1]
A Teaching Technique for Situational Navajo

Staying in Navajo

One of the most important techniques is **staying in Navajo**.

If the teacher lets on that she will talk—or accept—English, she should not be surprised if the children continue to talk English to her. They want to communicate, and they will do so in the language that is easiest for them.

To stay in Navajo, the teacher often has to simplify radically. Think through what you are going to do. Think through the verb or verbs that are absolutely necessary in this situation. Gesture, mimic, act out, and work through those children/students who understand the most—whatever it takes to 'get through'. Try to be consistent—try to use the same verb-forms in the same situations. For example, if you are going to teach the verb *áshléél* begin with the form in the Imperfective (present tense). Following is the verb paradigm for *áshléél* in the Imperfective:

Díkwíí?→ / ↓Háí?	Singular (1)	Dual (2)	Distributive Plural (3+)
Shí	ásh*l*éél	jílnéél	ádeiilnéél
Ní	ánílééł	óhłéél	ádaohłéél (ádaahłéél)
Bí	jílłéél	jílłéł	ádeiléél

Here is an example of a suggested first lesson using only the verb *áshléél*.

T: Díjį saad á'linii *áshléél* wolyéhígíí bídahwiidiil'áál. Háhgoshíį shíbéé'ehgóó ádaahi'íį dooleał. As you pretend to write your name in the air, tell the children/students, Shízhí' *áshléél*, dadohnil.

S: Shízhí' *áshléél* [while writing name in air].

T: K'ad áltso nihízhí' ádeiilyaa jini [all put hands down]. Again T will do same thing.
Shízhí' *áshléél* [writing name in air]. NAME, ní nízhí' ánílééł. Ha'át'íí baa naniná?

S: Shízhí' *áshléél* [while writing name in air].
This activity will continue until all children are called upon following the procedure above. At the end T will ask: Ha'át'íí bídahwiil'įįʔ

S: Respond with, Shízhí' *áshléél*.

The following are the paradigms for the verb *áshléél* in the Perfective (past) and the Future:

Perfective:

Díkwíí?→ / ↓Háí?	Singular (1)	Dual (2)	Distributive Plural (3+)
Shí	íshłaa	íílyaa	ádeiilyaa
Ní	íníłaa	óohłaa	ádaohlaa (ádaahłaa)
Bí	áyíílaa	áyíílaa	ádayíílaa

Future:

Díkwíí?→ / ↓Háí?	Singular (1)	Dual (2)	Distributive Plural (3+)
Shí	ádeeshłíí	ádíílníí	ádadíílníí
Ní	ádíílíí	ádoohłíí	ádadoohłíí
Bí	íldoolíí	íldoolíí	ádeidoolíí

[1]From: Navajo Nation Language Project, Division of Diné Education. (2003). *Directory of secondary Navajo language programs* (Funded by ANA Grant No. 90NL0125, WH NNLP 10/01), pp. 30 & 68.

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Specific Techniques

Although teachers are often admonished to "stay in Navajo", many are not shown/told techniques for doing so. Here are some specific techniques; there are many more. We strongly recommend teachers 'practicing' these techniques with each other to be better prepared to deal with situations where the students try to draw them back into English.

a. **Teacher's use of Navajo**

i) Think through directions carefully. Keep them short and simple. Try to use the same verbs/verb forms fairly consistently. Don't translate!

ii) Have the students repeat the directions when and where this is possible. To do so, you have to really keep directions simple so that they will be repeatable. Try to limit the directions to no more than three, at the most four, steps. After giving the directions, try to elicit these in the first person (I or we plural). Then have all the students repeat the directions.

iii) Meta-Navajo. Think through the Navajo you are going to need to elicit talk from the students, e.g., repeat after me, say what I say, ask me/him/her, tell me/him/her, again, etc. Teach some of these each week until students know and use most of them. Don't translate!

iv) Gestures can be used in place of a number of common meta-Navajo directions. You can use gestures to convey ideas like 'wait', 'listen' or 'talk'.

v) Try to demonstrate meaning. Act it out, draw pictures, use synonyms or near synonyms, etc. Do almost anything but shifting back to English. Don't translate!

vi) Teach the students appropriate survival phrases. One useful one is *Do' ák'ídíníłʔ* or *Bił'í'dínílǫ́ǫ́nʔ*? Tell students that you expect them to reply honestly when asked if they understand. Avoid acting exasperated.

vii) Teach the students to ask confirmation questions. Teach them to repeat directions (as in ii above) and later, to ask confirmation questions about directions, or about content.

b. **Responding to students' use of English**

i) Teach the students survival phrases like *Shíká anílyeed* to ask for help indicating that student doesn't know how to say a phrase in Navajo. The teacher acknowledges the student's request for help. The student tells the teacher what s/he has to say in English. Only then does the teacher respond. The implicit message is: "You have to say it in Navajo to get things done around here."

ii) Accept gestures from the students in place of words/phrases they don't know. But then help them by converting these gestures into Navajo (as above) and respond to what the student has said only when it has been said in Navajo.

iii) Simply say, quietly and naturally, *Díné k'ehjí*. No nagging. Just a quiet reminder.

iv) Inquire. Ask the student (in Navajo) what he is saying. Use *Ha'át'íí*? or a similar phrase. No nagging. Said quiet naturally, the message is: 'try again—in Navajo this time.'

v) Intentionally act as if you 'don't hear' what a student has said in English. Wait for the student to rephrase what s/he has said in Navajo. If the student persists in English, you might ask *Ha'át'íí*? (as above).

c. **Correcting or extending students' Navajo**

i) Ask a confirmation question—as if you were trying to be sure you understand what it is the student is trying to say. This can be made to sound quite natural. But the student's question may be in the wrong person. If so, the teacher may have to supply the correct form the student would use.

ii) Quietly correct what the student has said. Most teachers can do this in a different 'voice' so that the student knows this is a correction, not a response. Avoid the appearance of exasperation.

iii) Simply gesture that the student needs to tell you more. This is particularly useful in situations when the student has failed to supply a verb. Most people use a palm up gesture flexing the fingers to 'invite' more talk.

iv) If, after having received gestures to supply more, it appears that the student is unable to do so, the teacher may try to supply the rest in the form of a question. If the student accepts the teacher's addition, have the student say the whole thing (with the addition).

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Appendix B
Eliciting Techniques

We focus primarily on the 1 sg ("I"), 2 sg ("you-one"), and 3 sg ("s/he") forms of most verbs. There are many different ways of eliciting a given form of a verb without requiring the students to produce forms of verbs they have not been taught yet. These are not the only ways of presenting and developing these forms; they may not even be the best. They are shown here to give Navajo Immersion teachers some sense of what we're talking about.

In teaching, we find that the way we present a given form—for the first time—may be somewhat different from the way(s) in which we develop the student's comprehension of that verb form.

Below, we show ways of both presenting and initially developing comprehension of the 1 sg ("I"), 2 sg ("you-one"), and 3 sg ("s/he") forms of a given verb—here, to wash one's hands. With some modifications, these methods should work with most verbs—although imperfective verbs in momentaneous aspect can present some problems.

A. 1 sg ("I") forms.

Probably the simplest way of presenting the 1sg ('I") form is for the teacher to mime the action while making the statement that s/he is performing that action. The teacher then leads the students to mime washing hands while making the statement that they are doing so. (It may help if the teacher points to himself/herself at the beginning to make clear that s/he is talking about himself/herself. Later on, we might use a circular motion suggesting inclusion to indicate 1 pl ("we-three-or-more").

Presentation:

T: MIMICS WASHING HANDS, POINTS TO SELF,
SAYS: "I'm washing my hands."
GESTURES TO STUDENTS TO DO THE SAME

T/Gr: MIMIC WASHING THEIR HANDS, POINT TO SELVES,
SAY: "I'm washing my hands."

Development

T: COMMANDS [GROUP]: "Wash your hands [2 sg form], addressing *each* Student"

Gr: MIMIC WASHING HANDS, RESPOND: I'm washing my hands.

T: SIGNALS 'WAIT' WITH HAND-SIGNAL,
COMMANDS: Wash your hands
PAUSE; THEN CALLS ON A STUDENT BY NAME: John

S: RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.

T: CONTINUES, RAPID FIRE, CALLING RANDOMLY ON ALL STUDENTS

By the end of the development, students should be able to *respond* to the 2 sg ("you-one") command. But they are expected to actually say only the 1 sg ("I") form at this stage. Pauses are important because teachers often call on a student and then give a command or ask a question. Once the teacher has called someone's name, all the other students are 'off the hook' and can quit paying attention. By giving the command or asking the question first, the teacher is getting all of the students to attend to the oral directions. Even if s/he calls on only one student, all of the others should have 'rehearsed' their responses in their heads. In this way, we begin to get the students to 'think' in the language.

In time, the students should be able to use the 1 sg ("I" forms) in a variety of situations. But, as much as possible, they should do so either while actually mimicking the action (in 'instruction') or while actually doing the action (in 'practice').

B. 2 sg ("you-one") forms

Perhaps the simplest way of presenting the 2 sg ("you-one") form is to lead one student to command another to carry out the action. Having been commanded by the teacher with the 2 sg ("you-one") form in the previous day's activities, the students are now led to give, as well as respond to, 2 sg ("you-one") commands. The teacher begins by working with a single student but moves on into a "chain drill."

Presentation: review

T: COMMANDS [TO S1]: Wash your hands.
S1: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.

Presentation: new

T: GESTURES TO S1, THEN TO S2
INSTRUCTS [S 1]: Tell S2, "Wash your hands."
S1: COMMANDS [S2]: Wash your hands.
T: INSTRUCTS [S2] Tell S1, "I'm washing my hands."
S2: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.

T: GESTURES TO S2, THEN TO S3
INSTRUCTS [S2] Tell S3, "Wash your hands."
S2: COMMANDS [S3]: Wash your hands.
T: INSTRUCTS [S3] Tell S2, "I'm washing my hands."
S3: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.
...TEACHER CONTINUES WITH EACH PAIR. EACH S HAS TO GIVE A 1 SG RESPONSE AND THEN GIVE A 2 SG COMMAND

Development: chain

T: GESTURES TO S1, THEN TO S2
INSTRUCTS [S1]: Tell S2 "Wash your hands."
S1: COMMANDS [S2]: Wash your hands.

S2: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.
T: INDICATES BY GESTURE OR COMMAND FOR S2 TO COMMAND S3
S2 COMMANDS [S3]: Wash your hands.
... [ONCE THE CHAIN DRILL IS STARTED, T SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TELL EACH S WHAT TO SAY.
THE GROUP CONTINUES UNTIL ALL STUDENTS HAVE TAKE BOTH 'PARTS']

Alternative presentation: review
T: COMMANDS [S1]: Wash your hands.
S: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.

Presentation: new
T: GESTURES TO S1, THEN TO HIM-/HER-SELF
INSTRUCTS [S 1]: Tell me, "Wash your hands."
S: COMMANDS [T] Wash your hands.
T: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.

T: PAIRS OFF S1 AND S2
GESTURES TO S1, THEN TO S2
INSTRUCTS [S1]: Tell S2 "Wash your hands."
S1: COMMANDS [S2]: Wash your hands.
S2: MIMICS WASHING HANDS AND RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.
... [TEACHER CONTINUES PAIR BY PAIR. BUT ONCE CHAIN DRILL IS STARTED, T SHOULD USUALLY NOT HAVE TO TELL Ss WHAT TO SAY]

This sort of cooperating pair activity can be further developed as a group activity where (all) the "1's" command (all) the "2s" and vice versa. "Tell him/her" or "tell me" are not specific to a particular situation. They are considered to be meta-Navajo; they can be used in situations with almost any verb.

C. 3 sg ("s/he") forms

Probably the simplest way to elicit a 3 sg ("s/he") form is in response to the question "What is s/he doing?" (It might be remembered that this question is also considered meta-Navajo since it is used with any and all verbs). The teacher begins with a pair of Students.

Presentation: review
T: COMMANDS [S1]: Wash your hands.
S1: MIMICS THE ACTION; RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.
T: GESTURES TO S1 AND THEN S2
INSTRUCTS [S1]: Tell S2, "Wash your hands."

S1: COMMANDS [TO S2]: "Wash your hands."
S2: MIMICS THE ACTION, RESPONDS: I m washing my hands.

Presentation: new
T: ASKS [S1 ABOUT S2]: What is S2 doing?
T: SUPPLIES ANSWER: S/He's washing his/her hands.
RESPONDS: S/he's washing his/her hands.

Development [modified chain—students in (semi-) circle]
S1: COMMANDS [MORE DISTANT S3]: Wash your hands.
S3: MIMICS THE ACTION, RESPONDS: I'm washing my hands.
S1: ASKS [CLOSER S2] What is S3 doing?
S2: RESPONDS: S/he's washing his hands.

Here again, there are many ways of eliciting 3 sg ("s/he") forms. The more ways the student learn to respond, the more likely they are to respond to the *language* rather than just imitate what others do in that situation. We hope the reader can infer how the 1 pl ("we-three-or-more"), 2 pl ("you-three-or-more"), and the 3 pl ("they-three-or-more") forms might be elicited. Key to this is some sort of inclusive gesture intended to show that we are talking about a group rather than an individual.

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